

WCAR 2016 Williamson County Board of Education Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name Christy Coleman
Occupation Sales Technology Analyst, Mars Petcare
Position Sought School Board District 3
Incumbent: No
Additional publicly elected positions held
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Do you own your home? If so, approximately how long have you been a homeowner in this locality? Yes. I bought my Spring Hill home in August of 2012. Prior to that I owned a home in Nashville.

Do you now or have you ever owned rental property? No

If you are elected, what will be your top three (3) priorities for WCS and why? Priority 1: Repairing relationships between the board, superintendent, teachers and community. Why: The current board is not cohesive and long term this can cause damage to the reputation of the county. When surveyed, only 16% of teachers said they felt safe expressing their opinions to the school board. (Source: WCS Employee Survey 2016). I want to ensure that families stay in Williamson County and the school system is a large part of what brings and keeps them here. How: Providing tools for the community to be more involved such as newsletters, monthly town hall meetings, social media outlets, and active communication with local PTOs and parent groups. Providing these resources will allow a constituent to know their voice is being heard and my goal from this is to build trust through relationships. We do not have that currently for district 3 and I know my experience in project management, requiring me to bring in people from all over the business, will help me achieve this. I am already doing meeting recaps for two years without being a board member and have been championing for parental engagement for two years. Priority 2: Addressing growth. Why: In district 3 Allendale Elementary is at 112% capacity. Longview Elementary is at 98%. (Source: WCS 5 Year Strategic Planning as of 11/2/2105). On top of overcrowded schools in Spring Hill, we are also growing fast. Growth involves recruiting best in class talent, managing the budget, preparing for growth in diversity, and ensuring our administration has

the resources to keep Williamson County Schools one of the best districts in the nation. How: The WCS strategic planning team has built a solid network of local developers, local BOMAs and businesses to work with and optimize placement of new schools. Spring Hill city staff meets quarterly with WCS staff but we need a stronger partnership with all stakeholders (builders) in this area to get ahead of the growth instead of always responding to it. I would like to bring ideas such as land use and sponsorship to build schools in larger developments that are designed to appeal to the younger family demographic. I want to network with the builder community to hear what is feasible and what we can do to make it a mutual partnership. I also want to utilize my background in analytics and strategy to approach rezoning based on needs of the system based on projections a few years out. If we approach this strategically we can do our best to prevent a family from rezoning multiple times. It will take hard work and a lot of hours to do this right. Priority 3: Giving freedom back to teachers in their classrooms. Why: I have spoken with many teachers over the last few months and they are all frustrated with how the state has handled testing and the constant changes in standards. There needs to be a level of accountability back to the state with testing; however, we can do a lot better than TN Ready. I will work to ensure that teachers have the freedom to manage their classrooms based on the unique needs of their students. I will not support unnecessary policy that interferes and micromanages a classroom due to a board members personal whims. Policy should always have a clear intent and be designed with children and teacher's best interest at heart. Policy should provide clear guidance and not be suggestive. Policy should secure that the district remains within the laws set forth by the state. Policy should not be set based on personal bias or to champion a personal cause. How: I already am reviewing district policy and have been for over a year. I've been attending policy committee meetings taking notes and staying up to date. These are vital meetings in which the majority of work gets done, and they are not live streamed. If you are not there in person, you cannot see what is being discussed.

What is your motivation for seeking election to the Williamson County Board of Education? How does your background and experience qualify you to hold this position?

My family moved to Williamson County for the great public school system and I have a vested interest in that my son is in 2nd grade at Heritage. When I started to talk about running for the board months ago, I had many parents and teachers in district 3 reach out to me in support because I have been standing with them for two years regarding the school board. Their trust is what motivates me. There is a lot I can contribute professionally. I currently work for Mars Petcare

doing project management and process improvement as the Sales Technology Analyst for our Pet Specialty division. My job requires that I bring multiple stake holders together to find strategic solutions to business technological needs. This involves working with senior management and doing gap analysis to discover what the actual problems are, finding solutions that align with our company's principals, and managing the solution from start to finish. This involves setting and staying within a budget, triaging issues, managing vendor contracts, and working with functional experts globally.

What are your top priorities for Williamson County Schools over the next 5 to 10 years? How would you address and/or fund these priorities?

A new strategic plan will be created by the school board this year as the previous is expiring. I would like to see a focus on STEM: Providing our students interested in going into STEM careers with resources to prepare them to enter college and the work force ahead of the curve. TN is not a hot spot for STEM careers so we will need to be creative in finding grants and resources to fund programs. The Arts: Working to ensure all schools have proper resources for theater, music, and writing. Health: Childhood obesity is on the rise. I would like to see programs that make exercise a daily part of a child's routine. These programs do not interfere with instructional time as much as provide a level of competitiveness for small changes in habits, e.g. monthly focuses on steps, food etc. And are outside of gym and sports, focused on children not already in athletics. Funding – We are facing significant budget cuts from the state on top of massive growth. This is going to need to be an immediate focus if we want to be proactive.

What is your vision for Williamson County Schools over the next 5 to 10 years?

Maintaining excellence in curriculum, program availability, student test performance and graduation statistics. Make a step change in early childhood intervention program availability. Encouraging and embracing diversity. We are preparing our children to compete on a global level.

How would you improve and/or promote communication and cooperation among the community, the administration and elected officials?

1. I would start by at least answering emails which is rarely done by a lot of current board members. Even if the subject is controversial, every constituent deserves a response. 2. Recapping policies and meetings and providing back to the community via newsletters and utilizing social media in a positive way. These recaps can be hosted on my website as well. 3. I think it would be a huge positive for the community if the board was willing to have an online forum the community can engage in be it through social media where all or most board members answer questions. There is a risk of controversy with this because of how some people behave online, so we would want to first collaborate on appropriate behavior and high moderation of this forum. 4. Hosting actual

town hall type meetings open to the public. We already see a lot of this when it comes to rezoning but I would like to set a standing monthly meeting that is designed to be more interactive than simple public comment. This would be a good place to involve our other local politicians if they are willing. I believe that any of the above requires a board member that is willing to listen to the entire community and not just those with the exact same values.

How would you balance your decisions as a member of the school board with the input of parents and teachers?

1) Always remember that all opinions matter and not just those that match my personal ideals 2) Allow all sides to have a chance to be heard through the different tools I mentioned in question 7. 3) My decision making priorities are always child, teacher and families first.

In your view, what has the district done well over the last five years? What has the district done poorly that you would change?

Well: Strategic planning and managing growth. Recruiting and retaining great teachers. Making the budget work more efficiently. Dr. Looney's engagement at the school level. Working with the greater community such as WCAR, the business community, and other groups who have invested into the public school system. Poor: School board cohesiveness. Addressing bus driver and sub shortages in a timely manner. (Not poor but could do better).

What is your position on the federal government's involvement in setting standards for school systems without input of state or local entities?

I support the idea that we need a very basic level of standards across the country for each grade level as the world is shrinking and we want our students to be able to move from one district to another without being behind. But these standards should be created with input from the state board of education from every state and not done in a vacuum. Curriculum should be set at a district and state level. It should cover the federal standards at a minimum but in Williamson County we exceed these standards already.

Please feel free to include additional comments and/or upload any materials.

Additional Comments

I would like to thank WCAR for their consideration. You have been a great business partner with the public school system, especially in the arts, which is something I would like to see us excel at. I look forward to working with you as the future district 3 school board representative. Additionally, I would like to commit to the amount of time it takes to be a good and effective board member. If we want to grow our school system, we need a board full of members willing to invest the time and hard work it takes to become a top performing board as well as school system. I have proven my commitment over the last two years being very involved with the happenings of the board. The school board to me is a serious job that requires hard work.